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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [AEMR](#) [GV](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: GUINEA: FRENCH WATCH CLOSELY, MAKE READY FOR
POSSIBLE WORST CASE SCENARIO

REF: A. CONARKY 82
[1](#)B. CONAKRY 84

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d
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[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The French are observing events in Guinea and readying for an evacuation if events turn for the worst. A small GOF interagency team is in place and focusing on operational needs should an evacuation be necessary. The French believe that the situation is uncertain and volatile, with a number of factors to consider -- notably, whether President Conte will name a Prime Minister acceptable to the opposition and unions, whether the unions can sustain the strike at present levels, the possibility of an event that could spark an explosion, and the reactions of the military and Conte's own entourage. In the worst case scenario, the French expect to evacuate up to 10,000 individuals, including French citizens and those of its friends and allies. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) MFA Guinea deskoff Damien Syed on January 25 said that the GOF was watching Guinea closely. "We are nervous, but the situation has not degenerated to the point where we feel we have to do something." He said that a 5-person interagency GOF team, composed of MOD experts and one MFA representative, was in Conakry studying the operational aspects of a possible evaluation. This team would return to Paris soon and share its findings with other GOF elements that might be involved in an evacuation.

[1](#)3. (C) Syed said that the big question was whether the general strike, which had extended longer than most experts expected, would worsen, improve, or simply peter out as fatigue sets in on all sides. Syed said that President Conte's stated willingness to name a Prime Minister, in itself, would not solve the crisis. The unions and opposition, he said, would not be placated with a promise. "They will continue until they are certain that Conte has put in motion a process for change that he (Conte) cannot reverse."

[1](#)4. (C) The best solution would be for Conte to name a credible Prime Minister and then give that person real power to effect change, Syed observed. However, identifying such a person and amending the Constitution to accommodate such a role for a Prime Minister would not be easy. Moreover, a change in the power structure in Guinea could provoke a strong reaction from two groups who have been privileged under Conte -- his immediate entourage and the military. Would these groups be willing to see their power and

influence diminish? Syed doubted that they would, and said that the possibility of a palace or military coup existed, should Conte make real concessions to the opposition.

15. (C) It was difficult to see the current strike continuing at its present levels indefinitely, Syed noted. Most worrisome was the possibility of an incident or accident that could dramatically raise the level of violence such that an evacuation became necessary. Such an incident or accident became increasingly more likely as the strike continued and fatigue and ill-will increased on both sides. Hence the need to prepare for a worst case scenario.

16. (C) Syed said that an evacuation could involve up to 10,000 individuals at the extreme high end. These would include not only the 2,042 French nationals believed to be in Guinea but also the nationals of France's friends and allies. Syed named specifically citizens of EU member states, the U.S., and Japan, as well as the staff of the EU and other international organizations present in Guinea.

17. (C) As a practical matter, the general strike was taking its toll on everyday life at the French Embassy. Syed said the Embassy and its personnel were beginning to run short of fuel, certain staple food products normally obtained on the local market, and other products. "They can go on normally for another week or so, but after that, we are going to have to do something about provisions," he commented.

18. (C) Throughout the discussion, Syed repeatedly said that the GOF, and especially its mission in Guinea, hoped to work closely with the USG and with Embassy Conakry, not only in sharing information and analyses of the situation but also in

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maintaining communications and planning channels should an evacuation become necessary. We said that the USG and its elements would surely work closely with France and other concerned parties should that need arise.

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